

Coumba Graves  
Owner and Founder of La Magnolia, LLC  
23524 Rolling Fork Way  
Gaithersburg, MD 20882

April 24th, 2023

Dear Council Members:

My name is Coumba Graves, I am the owner and founder of La Magnolia Children's Clothing, and I am writing in support of the Montgomery County Black Collective and the programs offered to small and minority businesses and minority-led nonprofit organizations.

The Collective has advocated for and made available increased opportunities for development resources that have expanded minority businesses and providing one on one navigation, goal setting and accountability of key performance indicators.

I had the opportunity and honor to be part of the pilot cohort of The AMBER coaching program. Through these coaching sessions, I was able to benefit from critical resources to help increase growth opportunities and scale my business. I won the final competition pitch for \$10,000 with the Entrepreneur Equity Program of Shady Grove University, I am now showcasing my products in a brick-and-mortar store in Rockville and have grown my network tremendously.

The AMBER coaching program has provided more than 400 hours of one-on-one coaching to businesses like mine, provided resources for contracting opportunities to two dozen companies. They are linked to critical resources and have made key connections to increase opportunities for business expansion. They have the ability to break down complicated navigation resources and obtain meetings with grant/procurement decision makers which allows businesses to spend more time on the operation of their organization.

The Black Collective provides networking and dialogues through focus groups and events, and connection to subject matter experts, which are examples of the support and assistance needed by the small and minority business community.

I encourage you to provide continued support for the minority business development efforts conducted by the Black Collective. I also encourage you to consider allowing expenses such as technology or other infrastructure mini grants to organizations

through the funding structure. Direct resource support is essential to equitable funding that helps to make a positive impact in economic development for all communities.

Lastly, one of our greatest challenges as women black owned businesses is to access capital, please consider allowing more grants to Women Owned Businesses to help sustain and grow our businesses in the county.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

*Coumba B Graves*

Coumba Graves

La Magnolia Children's Clothing

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CC: Montgomery County Black Collective